

Puritan Beliefs and the Salem Witch Trials

Junior English
Mountain Pointe High School

Who were the Puritans?

- Definition: Refers to the movement for— reform, which occurred within the Church of England between the time of Elizabeth and Charles I.



Who were the Puritans?

- They wanted to rid the Church of any Catholic residue and build upon the ideas of John Calvin. This meant that the Church had no supreme authority over God. When Elizabeth died and Charles I dissolved parliament, and any connection between church and state, he demanded that anyone be killed who did not support the new Anglican Church. Hence, religious persecution began for the Puritans.

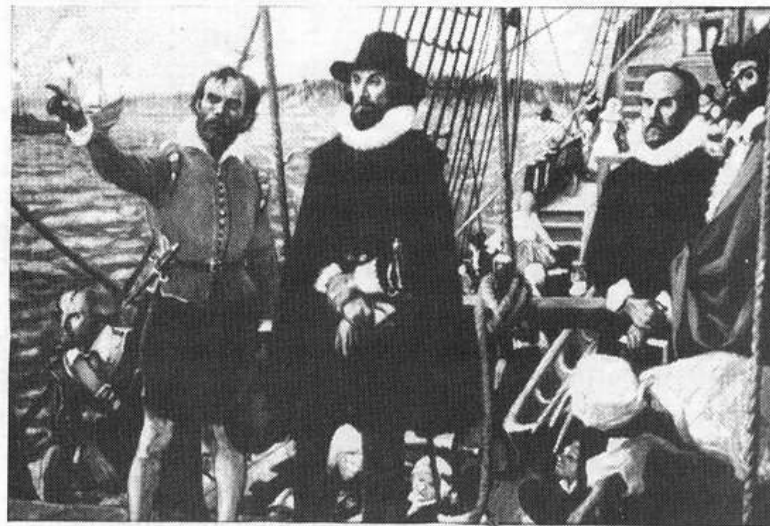
Who were the Puritans?

- They severed themselves from the new—
Anglican Church and left for the new world
in 1620 and established the
Massachusetts Bay Colony.



New World—New Beginning

- City upon a Hill Theory: That the new MA Colony would be a place of complete reform where God would be found in scripture and a stern work ethic.



Governor Winthrop desired to make New England "as a city upon a hill."

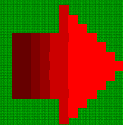
Who were the Puritans? –

- Education: A strong belief in education was established in order to read the bible. The first public school was founded in 1635, and Harvard College became an icon for educating ministers. In 1647 an act was passed that ensured that every town, which had a population of more than 100 people, would go to grammar school for free.



American National Identity: What do we take away from the Puritans, Planters and Pilgrims?

- Independence, patriotism, industry, practicality, tolerance, a sense of justice, a sense of humor; all developing as the villages/colonies changed politically and religiously.



American National Identity: What do we take away from the Puritans, Planters and Pilgrims?

- These people were the first to build upon the idea of the American Dream. The idea that a new path could be forged and goals attained.
- We inherited an emphasis on hard work, a strong sense of religion, duty to country and freedom from oppression.



Puritan Goals, Practices & Beliefs

- Sought to cleanse the culture of corrupt sinful practices
- Believed that the civil government should strictly enforce public morality by prohibiting vices
- Wished to purge churches of every vestige of Roman Catholic ritual and practice

Puritan Goals, Practices & Beliefs

- Church had no supreme authority over God
- Worship services were simple, often long, learned sermons in which their clergy expounded passages from the Bible



Puritan Goals, Practices & Beliefs

- Membership was limited to the “visibly godly”
 - Those who lead sober, upright lives
 - Strict standards for admission to their churches; each person applying for membership had to testify publicly to his/her experience of conversion

Conversion and Predestination

- Believed that human beings were innately sinful; depraved
- God would spare a small number of “elect” individuals
 - God was infinitely merciful
 - Corrupt mankind justly deserved the fate of hellfire

Was Predestination Unfair?

- God was a distinctly undemocratic sort of deity
- God offered no incentive for upright moral behavior
- Calvinist theology denied human beings any free will!
- BUT.....

So Why Did So Many Believe?

- It was a “comfortable doctrine” if you believed yourself “saved”
- The changes of the 15th and 16th centuries were unsettling and people needed:
 - Social order
 - Intellectual and moral certainty
 - Spiritual consolation

Doctrine of Predestination answered these needs

- It offered a wider message:
 - God had a plan for all of Human history
 - Good would triumph over evil

Doctrine of Predestination answered these needs

- Every person in human history had a predestined role to play
 - Their life was meaningful
 - Strivings and sufferings produced peace and security: a heaven on earth

How Did Predestination Influence the Lives of the Puritans?

- They strove to reshape society and government to agree with what they believed to be the will of God
- They strove to lead godly, disciplined lives
- They believed that their ability to master their evil inclinations provided some evidence that they ranked among the “elect”

How Did Predestination Influence the Lives of the Puritans?

- Leading a godly, moral life was an encouraging sign of the effect of being chosen by God
 - However, it was NOT the cause of their salvation
- Nothing was more important than gaining greater reassurance of salvation

New Englanders and the “World of Wonder”

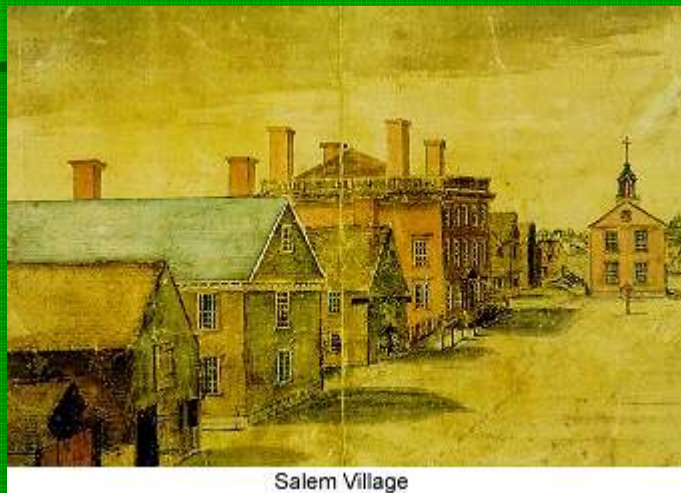
- Both the ordinary and the educated believed in:
 - Witches
 - Power of Satan to assume visible form
 - Foretelling power of dreams and portents
 - Strange prodigies
 - “Monstrous” births
 - Miraculous deliverances

**And all of this leaves them
ripe for the mass hysteria
we call.....**

Salem Witch Trials

Salem Politics:

- Salem Town vs. Salem Village: The Putnam's wanted to separate from Salem Town to establish their own congregation. Under the Rev. Samuel Parris, they began their own meetings. Over half of the congregation were Putnam's; caused strain among members.



Salem Village

Salem Witch Trials

Salem Politics:

- Rev. Samuel Parris: Was forced to rely solely on volunteer contributions because a faction denied paying him any money due to the “perks” he was receiving from the Putnam's. Eventually, this faction would demand to be separate from the Putnam's congregation, unsuccessfully.



Salem Witch Trials

Salem Politics:

- Puritan Play time: Rev. Parris opposed any games for fear that idleness would allow the devil to enter into their hearts. Reading was a popular past time, along with the bible, the children would read books about witch craft, prophecy and fortune telling. The children would practice the incantations and divinations for fun.

Witchcraft

- Puritan definition: Entering into a compact with the devil in exchange for certain powers to do evil, thus it was a sin because it denied God's superiority, and a crime because the witch could call up the devil to perform cruel acts against others.
- The determinant: Often, the slaves would be asked to make a "witch cake" made of rye meal mixed with urine of the afflicted, then fed to a dog; if the dog displays similar sign as the afflicted, then they were bewitched.

The Accused

After a group of girls are caught dancing in the woods with Tituba, a slave, they feign sickness and possession. Among the group is the daughter of Rev. Parris and the daughter of Tomas and Anne Putnam, who demands that the possessors be found and punished.



The Accused

The following are the first accused by the girls:

Sarah Osbourne – An elderly, non-church going woman.

Sarah Good – A homeless woman who begged door to door.

Tituba – A slave from Barbados.

Martha Corey – Accused because of poor standing in the community.

Rebecca Nurse – 71, a kind and generous lady, she responded when accused “What sin has God found in me un-repentant of that He should lay such an affliction upon me in my old age?”

John and Elizabeth Proctor – Farmers whose servant, Mary Warren accused them of witchcraft because John knew the girls were lying and requested that the girls be harshly punished.

Rev. John Burroughs – Accused because left position over a salary dispute. Called the “Black Minister”

The First Hangings

By the end of 1692, over 200 people were jailed and standing accused of witchcraft.

Gallows Hill

Bridget Bishop – Found poppets with missing head in her home.

Sarah Good, Sarah Wilds, Elizabeth How, Susannah Martin and Rebecca Nurse

Nurse states to Rev. Hayes, “I am no more a witch than you a wizard, and if you take away my life God will give you blood to drink”

George Burroughs – Able to recite the Lord’s prayer.

John Proctor, George Jacobs, John Willard and Martha Carrier – were all hanged. **Elizabeth Proctor** was not hanged because she was pregnant.



The Madness Begins to Die

Eventually, the town begins to question the validity of the trials and the girls accusations when people of good standing in the community are being put to death.

Giles Corey – Is crushed to death and says “more weight” when he dies.

Mary Easty – Writes a letter to the court demanding her innocence and questioning the girls authority over the court.

With George Burroughs prayer, Mary Easty’s letter, and Giles Corey’s refusal to stand trial, the town begins to doubt the validity of the trials and the girls.

Increase Mather states, “It were better that ten suspected witches should escape than that one innocent person should be dissolved.” The last trial was held in January 1693.

In all, 19 people were hung and one crushed to death.

The Aftermath

The few remaining – Many were left in jail because they could not afford to pay the fine to be released. Crops, fields, livestock, homes, meeting houses all fell, due to abandonment. Many felt that God was punishing them for executing innocent people.

Joseph Green – Once the Rev. Parris is thrown out of Salem, Green manages to bring everyone back together, where the accused sat down with the accuser. While many were excommunicated, many returned to the church.